

**Town of West Hartford
Human Rights Commission
Mission Statement**

"The West Hartford Human Rights Commission fosters mutual understanding and respect among people, and encourages equality of treatment of all people, regardless of race, color, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, civil union status, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status, genetic information, age, economic status, lawful source of income, national origin or ancestry, or present or past history of physical, mental, intellectual or learning disability including, but not limited to blindness."

**Town of West Hartford
Human Rights Commission
West Hartford Town Hall
7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, March 7, 2017
Room 217**

Minutes

Attendance

Krishna Adhikari	Present
Charles Andrews, Vice Chair	Excused
Judith Borden, Chair	Present
Charles Cleary, Secretary	Present
Denise Jackson-Riley	Present
Pramod Prahan, Administrative Liaison	Present
Sarah Raskin	Present
Karyl Shaughnessy	Present
Barry Walters	Excused
Judith Wyman	Present

Also in attendance – a member of the public, a West Hartford high school student.

Judy B. called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. She asked the commissioners to introduce themselves to the student attending the meeting.

Krishna moved, and Karyl seconded, approval of the January 3rd meeting minutes.

Commissioners discussed the Martin Luther King Day event held in West Hartford Town Hall on January 16th. Commissioners who attended said it was the best one yet, very inspiring, and very well attended.

Chuck C. asked what the source document was for the list of protected groups listed in the commission's mission statement. Civil union status may no longer be predicted now that same sex marriage is legal. Judy K. volunteered to review her notes from previous discussions on the mission statement.

Sarah had asked that a “Resolution Affirming West Hartford, CT as A Welcoming & Inclusive Town, 2017” be emailed to commissioners with the agenda. She was asking the commission to support the resolution. Commission members discussed the resolution & expressed several points of view:

- Some of the language was too vague;
- Some of the language seemed to imply a defiance of the federal government;
- Was the language of the resolution neutral?
- What was the difference between a ‘sanctuary city’ & a ‘welcoming & inclusive’ one?
- Willimantic, New Haven & Hartford were sanctuary cities. West Hartford had discussed this and did not want to claim this title due to possible negative consequences.
- What if the commission endorsed the resolution & the Town Council did not?
- If Connecticut is considered a ‘sanctuary state,’ what was the goal of the resolution?
- Commission members who had worked on the mascot issue felt some of the divisiveness raised during those discussions may arise again.

After discussion of the topic, commissioners agreed to the following actions:

- Sarah would send commission members more background information via email [She sent an email to all commission members on March 8th]
- Karyl would research language & legal concerns & email commission members.

Pramod reported that the last bullet of the resolution (Establish an information and access portal to answer questions (FAQs) & direct services to immigrants, refugees and Muslim communities) was already happening at the library at the request of the mayor.

Pramod & Judy B encouraged commission members to attend an event at the Faxon Library on Saturday, March 11th at 2:00 p.m. entitled, “America is My Home – Reflections of A Refugee & Two Immigrants.”

Judy B. encouraged commission members, and the student, to read the book selected for One Book/One Town – Of Beetles & Angels by Mawi Asgedom. The book did not appear to be assigned as required reading at Town schools at this point.

Commission members asked that Martin Luther King Day & Human Rights Day be added to the commission’s calendar of events.

Pramod reported that the Welcome Guide he had been working on was being fast-tracked after discussions with the mayor. It would be online soon. Denise questioned if some immigrants would have the computer and language skills to access it. Pramod distributed flyers that also described various town services and how to access them. Judy B. suggested involving high school students to help distribute the flyers to immigrant communities. The student suggested having them available at freshman orientation, as students & their parents attended that event. Commission members agreed the flyers were very informative and suggested they be made available in other languages.

Chuck C. reported that he, Barry & Chuck A. were the sub-committee that had worked on the Charter of Compassion. At the January meeting Barry had volunteered to set up a meeting with Town Council member Ben Wenograd. The meeting had not yet taken place. Chuck C. reported that the Charter for Compassion had a new initiative called One America Registry (<https://oneamericaregistry.org/>). The language of the Registry was more forceful and political than the resolution discussed.

Sarah reported that Trinity College was hosting numerous non-profit and volunteer groups Sunday, March 12th in Mather Hall from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. She encouraged commission members to attend.

Chuck C. reported that he would be away for the May meeting. He would prepare the agenda, but asked if someone would be able to take minutes. Sarah graciously offered to do so.

With no further business, Judy B. motioned, and Karyl seconded, that the meeting adjourn. The meeting ended at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Chuck Cleary
March 12, 2017